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Soviet Use of False Airfields

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

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In actual practice the Soviets build false airfields of both the decoy and

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dummy types, recognizing the variation in purpose between decoy and dummy airfields. However, in SAF terminology there is only the one term **ложный аэродром** (Lozhnyy aerodrom) or "false airfield". This term is applied by the Soviets to both decoy and dummy airfields.

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The decision to construct false airfields is, in most cases, made at Air Army Headquarters. There are cases, however, when the Air Army Commander delegates this responsibility to the Corps Commander. The assignment of responsibility for the execution of a decision to build a false airfield is not fixed. Sometimes it is the duty of an Air Army staff officer to see that the decision is carried out, on other occasions a Division or subordinate Unit Commander has the responsibility.

Basically the false airfield is a ruse employed by Soviet frontal (tactical) aviation. On rare occasions, however, the situation and the nature of other objectives might dictate the construction of false airfields without frontal aviation being involved. Take, as an example, a case where an important industrial installation is located near an operational airfield which enemy aircraft might use as a landmark or orientation point in attacking the factory. In this instance, the Soviets would completely camouflage the operational airfield and then construct a false airfield at a suitable place not far away.

The location of a false airfield is determined largely by (a) the similarity of available terrain to that surrounding the nearby operational airfield, and (b) the distance desired between the false airfield and the operational airfield. It is necessary to bear in mind that one of the two main objectives in building false airfields is to draw enemy aircraft away from the operational airfields; consequently the distance between the operational airfield and the false airfield has to be fairly small. The Soviets would not build a false airfield near rail facilities, however, unless there was an operational airfield to be protected nearby.

The distance between an operational airfield and a false airfield usually varies from about five to ten or more kilometers. This factor is strongly influenced by the available terrain (see preceding question).

During wartime a special crew is assigned to each Air Army and each separate Air Technical Division for the purpose of building false airfields and for camouflaging aircraft. This crew is subordinate to the Chief of the Air Army Camouflage Service and is composed of the following specialists: Carpenters, painters, joiners, tinsmiths, electricians, etc. Each Separate Air Technical Battalion has a similar crew. However, this latter type of crew has fewer specialists because it does not build false airfields. This last-mentioned type of crew engages strictly in the work of camouflaging operational airfields and the aircraft on them.

The following materials are used in the construction of false airfields. Plywood, ordinary lumber, canvas, paints, varnish, storage batteries, sheet iron, old aircraft (ie, aircraft that have been damaged beyond repair), and miscellaneous other items.

In building false airfields, the SAF definitely prefers to use the sites of abandoned, temporary-type, airfields. As a general rule, such sites are used whenever they are available and suitable for the purpose.

In the first place, the crew of specialists concentrate on building dummy, full-size aircraft which are difficult to distinguish from the real ones when viewed, or photographed, from the air. These dummy aircraft are dispersed around the false airfield and they are camouflaged with the same degree

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of care that would be devoted to genuine aircraft parked on an operational airfield. Secondly, a regular crew is always based on a permanent, false airfield. This crew creates the impression of continuous activity on the airfield. For this purpose the crew has at its disposal trucks and other vehicles found on an operational airfield. These vehicles are driven around the false airfield in order to make it appear that the site is active. This sort of activity takes place particularly when enemy aircraft are over the field or are in its vicinity.

Another Soviet device for adding the appearance of reality to a false airfield is to have two or three of the latest fighter aircraft based there. These fighter aircraft are manned by young, inexperienced pilots who, immediately upon spotting the enemy, take off and engage the enemy aircraft.

In order to make it more difficult for enemy reconnaissance aircraft to detect false airfield building activity, all the construction work is done during the hours of darkness. The parking place of each dummy aircraft is changed and recamouflaged daily so as to increase the effectiveness of the deception. And finally, in order to be certain that the false airfields appear real from the air, the SAF has its own reconnaissance aircraft photograph all friendly air bases in the area. Later, these photographs are compared for effectiveness of the camouflage and of the measures of deception.

When enemy aircraft actually attack a false airfield, the Soviets make a special effort to convince the enemy that his attack has been effective. For example, the crew of the false airfield has the dummy aircraft rigged up with explosives and some fuel in advance. When an enemy bomb lands near one of the dummy aircraft, the crew blows it up by means of electrical fuses. After each enemy raid, friendly reconnaissance is again conducted over the false airfield in order to determine what improvement of the camouflaging techniques are needed.

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The chances of recognizing a false airfield from the air by analyzing the intensity of the flak there are practically non-existent. This is because false airfields are usually in the area of frontal aviation and would, consequently, be protected more by friendly fighter aircraft than by AAA.

the problem of making a runway on a false airfield resemble the runway on a modern, operational airfield. making a dummy runway appear like the real thing from the air is not a great problem. The Soviets have developed (and are producing) large sheets of asbestos (the asbestos sheets are the same size as the concrete blocks on a regular concrete runway), one side of which is coated with a thin layer of cement. When a dummy runway is laid out with these sheets of coated asbestos, it will not be distinguishable from an operational runway from the air. in the event of hostilities, Soviet frontal aviation would concentrate on the use of improvised airfields rather than on modern airfields. Soviet fighters and tactical bombers are capable of taking off and landing on hard, natural-surfaced fields. The modern runways would be fine, if available, but they would not be considered a necessity by the SAF. The same concept applies to runway lights. Night landings are accomplished with the aid of flares and aircraft landing lights.

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If an operational airfield is damaged, the Soviets will make no effort to have the nearby false airfield resemble the damaged, operational airfield. The Soviets will, however, spare no effort in repairing the damaged, operational airfield so that it can be used again.

False airfields are not used as "baited traps". All available SAF fighters would rise to attack the intruding enemy aircraft regardless of the target. If the enemy aircraft should succeed in reaching a Soviet airfield without opposition from fighters, all available fighters from that and from all surrounding airfields would be sent up to engage the enemy.

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[redacted] the Soviets did, in fact, accept the concept of providing false navigation aids for enemy bombers. These officers stressed the fact that details on this subject are Top Secret. Indeed, everything written about the communication service is "SOVERSHENNO SEKRETN" (Top Secret).

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[redacted] German theories and techniques in respect to decoy and dummy airfields, have had no influence whatsoever on the SAF theory and practice of the false airfield technique. [redacted] SAF techniques in building false airfields were much better than the German techniques during World War II. During the World War II Battle of Bobruysk (28° 36'E - 53° 10'N) [redacted] German bombers attacking and bombing a Soviet false airfield in that area.

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[redacted] During World War II a field manual, published by the Directorate of VVS Rear Services, served as a guide to camouflaging and to the building of false airfields. This manual was classified "For Military Use". [redacted]

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[redacted] two or three separate volumes dealing with this subject. After the war, the above-mentioned "For Military Use" classification was discontinued and all such manuals were reclassified "SECRET". About 1948 the Voroshilov General Staff Academy issued a secret informational Bulletin on the subjects of camouflaging, false airfield construction and allied subjects. The following categories of officers usually see the literature on this subject: Unit Commanders and their Deputies, Chiefs of Intelligence Sections, Chief of Operations Sections and Chief of Camouflaging Services. The personnel of an SAF Classified Document Section also have access to this literature inasmuch as they have custody of the material.

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[redacted] False airfields, in Soviet literature on the subject, are presented as part of the PVO system in the sense that they are set up for the purpose of luring enemy aircraft from more lucrative targets.

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[redacted] Soviet ground forces are in no way involved in the activity of building or maintaining false airfields.

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[redacted] SAF pilots have no right to land, or even fly over unfamiliar territory. The only time a pilot can land in unfamiliar territory is when such a landing is dictated by an emergency. In such cases, the pilot will find out after landing whether he is on an operational airfield or on a false airfield. In correspondence between command echelons, a false airfield is indicated by this symbol  being placed next to the designation. It is possible that a pilot might have such an indication on his map, but such is not practice and instances of it are rare.

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